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Your Voice from Senate District 7

Hi Dan,

Because this is my legislative summary of a very long session and special session, this e-blast is longer than usual. I wanted it to be thorough, and I hope you will take a few minutes to read it at your leisure. If you have any questions concerning any of these issues please feel free to contact our Senate office by e-mail, letter, or phone.

After nearly six full months' work, the 82nd Session and Special Session finally came to an end on June 29th. As a member of the Senate Finance, Education, Healthcare Committees, as well as five other major committees and sub-committees, it was non-stop work for me. Because of my assignments and the legislation our office carried, I was involved in virtually all of the major decisions made this session. As always, I view my job as being your voice in these decisions. Together we had a major seat at the table to fight for our conservative principles.

Empower Texas, one of the leading conservative legislative watchdog groups, rated me as an A+ for my voting record. Only two others, Senator Birdwell and Senator Huffman, received an A+ conservative rating of the 31 senate members.

[Click to see the ratings of the Senate and House.](#)

The Challenge

We began the session with the challenge of a \$20 billion+ shortfall due to the national economy's impact on Texas. Our goal was to balance the budget without raising taxes while still meeting the needs of our most important programs. I believe we accomplished those goals.

The Budget

We balanced the budget without raising taxes. I was the only Republican of ten on the Finance Committee who voted against using the Rainy Day Fund (RDF) in the 2012-13 budget. I believed we should preserve most of the RDF for the future. I expect we will face another major shortfall in 2013 as property values continue to be flat and the economy sluggishly improves. I was able to find other Republican senators, not on Finance, to join with me to hold the line on our reserve fund. The final budget did not use the RDF for 2012-13. Instead we required further spending cuts if the budget falls short of projected revenues. Once that goal was achieved, I supported the final budget that cut \$15 billion in spending, didn't raise taxes, met our obligations, while saving our RDF for the future.

There has been a lot of misinformation distributed by those who never want to cut any dollars for any program. The headlines predicting 100,000 teachers being fired and nursing homes being closed never materialized. Cuts to local school districts were restrained to an average of five percent. We funded our nursing homes at almost 100% of current levels. We also fully funded

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public safety and even added over \$100 million to border security.

While healthcare, the fastest growing segment of our budget, is still a major challenge, we passed legislation with the intention of saving billions moving forward. Depending on the future of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare, we will have to revisit Medicaid again in 2013. That was another important reason to save the RDF from depletion.

Budget Facts:

- Final budget 2012-13
\$172.5 billion total
- Education, healthcare,
and public safety equal
85% of all state
spending

In the end, we cut \$15 billion from the budget and we focused our money where it is needed most.

Our budget, even with the \$15 billion in cuts, is still a whopping \$172.5 billion over two years. Education, healthcare, and public safety make up over 85% of all state spending.

Prioritizing Classroom Funding

As a member of the Senate Finance Committee, as well as the Education Finance Sub-Committee, I spent a lot of time ensuring that classroom funding was prioritized. Education, almost half of our entire budget, was funded at levels insisted on by the Senate. The final budget added almost \$6 billion back to education from the original proposed budget. The total cut will see district budgets decreased somewhere between 3% and 8%.

Superintendents from across the state supported the Senate plan over the House plan because, while they realized that some cuts were inevitable, the Senate plan placed a priority on the classroom and teachers.

The districts by and large have done a good job of focusing their cuts on non-classroom areas where possible. One of my key goals was to protect teacher jobs and the classrooms even while cutting 5% from the education budget. The vast majority of teachers that were terminated in the spring will return. Class sizes have not changed and textbooks have been fully funded. We also passed major legislation supported overwhelmingly by school districts that provides them needed flexibility in controlling their budgets.

Transportation

Transportation funding continues to be a challenge. Our gas tax revenues are nearly flat despite having millions of additional cars on the road. Cars today on average get much better gas mileage than a decade ago. Even with higher gas prices, the state tax is flat at \$.20 per gallon. Though we've added cars, it is because of better gas mileage that our total collections have been kept at a relatively flat level for a decade. In spite of this budgetary challenge, working with Representative Fletcher and Senator Williams, we were able to push TxDOT to place a priority on building out the Grand Parkway, finishing 249, and continuing the planning to expand 290. These projects will all be a combination of toll lanes and free lanes and take many years to complete, but work is to begin in the next year.

Other Major Legislation

As stated previously, I was proud to be heavily involved in

virtually every major piece of legislation passed this session. I was a co-author of the **Photo Voter I.D.** bill that finally passed. I co-authored and authored major healthcare reform including the **Healthcare Compact** which will give Texas the option to join other states in opting out of federal healthcare.

I authored the **Sonogram Bill** that finally passed after I first introduced it in 2007. It requires a sonogram 24 hours before an abortion. We have 80,000 abortions each year in Texas. This bill will improve informed consent and could save 15,000 lives a year if just 20% of women see the sonogram and choose not to have the abortion.

I also passed legislation to protect our **100% disabled veterans' property tax exemption** so it can be passed on to their spouse upon their death. This legislation was the number one priority for many veterans' groups across the state, and I was happy to join Representative Fletcher in delivering this to them.

I passed nearly a dozen "local" bills that will have a positive impact on our senate district. I joined with Representative Bohac to pass the bill that says HOAs cannot prevent homeowners from flying a U.S., Texas or military flag.

[Click to visit my senate website for a more comprehensive review of the bills that I passed.](#)

Criminal Justice

On Criminal Justice, I passed legislation to increase penalties for drunk drivers who are twice the legal limit. I also passed legislation increasing penalties for smuggling illegal aliens into Texas and co-authored legislation to address human trafficking.

Unfinished Work

There were several disappointments. Every Republican senator signed onto the **Sanctuary City** bill in the special session. The Senate passed it to the House with two weeks remaining in the special session. Unexplainably, it was stuck in a House committee and never was voted out. It did not pass in the special session.

Also, after I passed the "anti-groping" **TSA Bill** out of the Senate, it failed to pass the House on the last day of session. However, the TSA has begun to change their invasive pat-down policies. I believe that change was in part due to the focus the Texas legislature put on this issue.

The Future

As mentioned, 2013 promises to offer significant financial challenges once again. We are a fast growing state. Senate District 7 was the fastest growing district in the last decade and will continue to grow at a rapid rate. We are going to have to begin finding long-term solutions to funding education, transportation, and healthcare. We have to lower property taxes and resolve the business tax issue. I will be sending out my plan for the future in upcoming e-blasts.

It is truly an honor to serve you in the Texas Senate. I hope you

can see from my volume of work that I did my very best to represent you this session, speak on your behalf, and fight for the issues important to all Conservatives.

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Fwd: response

From: **Dan Patrick** (danpatrick700@gmail.com)
Sent: Thu 3/29/12 12:26 PM
To: Logan Spence (loganspence@hotmail.com)

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Dan Patrick** <danpatrick700@gmail.com>
Date: Sat, May 21, 2011 at 12:44 AM
Subject: response
To: Dan Patrick <danpatrick700@gmail.com>

The House understood, and stated, from the time they passed their initial budget that they needed to add back dollars. In the end Senate educational funding levels were agreed to by both chambers. The budget ended up near the Senate level across the board. Both the House & Senate passed a conservative budget. Total cuts about 15 billion. The House levels for education were below levels required.

In terms of English, I agree and believe in emersion for English. However, there are simply not the votes to pass it.

Calling me a RINO - that dog doesn't hunt. I'm consistently rated with the most, or in the top 2 or 3, conservative rating each session. I've cast nearly 12,000 votes. That is a cross the board consistent record.